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ABSTRACT

In order to make disadvantaged adults aware of the resources of their public library, library tours for adult basic education classes and other groups are suggested. After a rationale for the tours and a description of tour clientele, guidelines are given for tour planning and arrangements, student preparation, transportation, refreshments, displays, subjects to be discussed, films and other materials, tours for special occasions, and the issuing of library cards. In addition, there is a list of pitfalls to avoid as well as short descriptions of tour programs at several libraries. (LS)

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LIBRARY SERVICE GUID

Appalachian Adult Education Center

GROUP LIBRARY TOURS FOR DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

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APPALACHIAN ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

Public Library Training Institutes
Library Service Guide No. 13

GROUP LIBRARY TOURS FOR DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

by

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Preface

This guide is one of a series on library services to disadvantaged adults. The purpose of the series is to explo alternative ways public libraries can expand services to this special group.

Each guide attempts to recognize the differences among public library budgets, staff size and training, and th differences among the communities libraries serve. Each guide deals with a particular service and, where possible, sugges several alternative ways the library can provide that service to disadvantaged adults. The library, then, can and shou further adapt the suggestions to fit the resources and needs of its local community.

The guides combine (1) a thorough search of the library literature; (2) the knowledge of professional librarians, wh wrote many of the guides and evaluated the entire series; and (3) the experience of the Appalachian Adult Educatio Center (AAEC) in designing interagency educational programs for disadvantaged adults.

The AAEC has worked with state, regional, and local public libraries in seven states in projects funded by the Burea of Libraries and Learning Resources of the U.S. Office of Education. In one project, four urban and three rural cente demonstrated ways public libraries and adult basic education programs could improve their services to disadvantaged adul by coordinating efforts in reader guidance, recruitment, library orientation, community referral, and in the selection, us and delivery of materials. The AAEC also conducted institutes in local public libraries in seven states in designing an implementing library services for disadvantaged adults.

Work on those and other projects led to three conclusions, upon which the guides are based: (1) that undereducate adults need information and services to help solve problems; (2) that the public library can meet those needs throug adjustments in procedures and interagency cooperation; and (3) that the materials and services required for disadvantage adults are useful and useable to all adults.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Group Tours?

Disadvantaged adults need the materials, resources, and services of the public library, to help them get information to solve daily life problems, and to help them overcome the problems of undereducation. But generally, disadvantaged adults are not library users. Many have never been to a public library, and many have fears and suspicions of the institution. They are hesitant to come on their own or alone and may feel strongly that the library has nothing to offer them.

One way to introduce disadvantaged adults to library services and materials is to arrange tours of the public library, branch libraries, community reading centers, and bookmobiles for groups of disadvantaged adults. Group tours can help overcome hesitancy and fears and make people feel at ease in the library.

The public library can help disadvantaged adults by providing free, reliable information which they need to solve daily problems but which they can't get—or can't afford—anywhere else. Tours of the library can be an effective way to let disadvantaged adults know that the library can help.

Tours for Whom?

This guide defines "disadvantaged adults" as those people sixteen years old or older and out of school who read

below the tenth grade level, or whose income is below poverty level.

To identify groups of disadvantaged adults in the community, the library should take the initiative by contacting various social agencies in the community to identify groups of disadvantaged adults among their clients. These groups might include adult basic education classes, Head Start classes and parents, job training centers, church groups, ethnic organizations, sewing clubs, or those who show up at a community gathering place. Often a library tour for the ABE teachers or the representatives of the social agencies helps acquaint them with the library as a resource for their own work as well as for their clients.

This Guide

The suggestions in this guide are geared largely to conducting tours of the library for adult basic education classes, but the suggestions can be applied to tours for other groups of disadvantaged adults.

The guide is divided into four major parts: (1) preparing for tours; (2) conducting tours; (3) pitfalls to avoid; and (4) what other libraries have done.

PREPARING FOR THE TOUR

Planning in Advance

Successful tours require careful plann and preparation. Issuing an invitatio not enough. The librarian should be to set the stage weeks before the t date.

If an adult basic education (ABE) c or several classes are being invited, example, the librarian should contact ABE coordinator and plan the det with the teachers. Some of prearrangements will be:

Making the Arrangements

- Setting the date and time. Man small libraries are closed at nigh when most ABE classes meet. may be necessary to arrange t open the library certain evenings t accommodate the ABE class visit

- Discussing the characteristics a interests of the students, i.e., numb ages, sexes, adult responsibiliti individual interests and problem reading levels, and whether any ha visited or used a school or pub library.

- Arranging for the adult students obtain library cards prior to the tou

- Deciding on the agenda for the tou the length of time available, the pa of the library to be visited, the ro

of the teacher and the librarian, materials to be introduced (including any film to be shown), and refreshments.

- Arranging displays of special interest.
- Arranging for transportation.

Getting the Clients Ready for the Tour

The librarian should consult with the teacher about preparing the students for the tour by describing the services of the library, showing a filmstrip about it, and/or telling them in detail about the tour. After the ABE students have obtained their library cards, the librarian can help by visiting the class, giving a talk about some human problem area and taking a range of materials—some give-away, others to be charged out. If the classroom has a deposit collection from the library, the librarian can tell about other library materials, such as films and records. Before the first tour, the librarian or the teacher should tell the students just what the tour will include. The students should recognize that both their teacher and the librarian will accompany them. It should be clear that the adult students can borrow materials when they go on the tour.

Transportation

Other preparations for the tour include providing transportation and refreshments. Lack of transportation is frequently a difficult limitation to any services to the disadvantaged. If the group is small, cars can be used; a large group might best be handled by bus. Some groups have used school buses or have made arrangements to use buses provided by Community Action or church groups. The ABE coordinator and the librarian must be aware of and work out the transportation problems for the proposed tour, as well as any planned on-going cooperative programs.

Refreshments

Most people relax when they break bread together. The library staff should seriously consider providing refreshments for the tour groups. If this can be arranged, refreshments should be planned well in advance and a staff member assigned responsibility for them. Volunteers—including outgoing ABE clients—could plan and serve the refreshments.

Displays

Attractive, accessible displays of materials on subjects of concern to disadvantaged adults help awaken interest in library materials and services.

CONDUCTING THE TOUR

Greeting the Group

In conducting the tour, the librari should greet the group at the door in friendly way, shaking hands, learni their names, and welcoming the Ideally, the librarian's earlier visit w have broken the ice so the librarian w not be a stranger.

Reviewing the Tour

If the library has a meeting room, t group might be taken there for a revi of what they will see on the tour. T should be an informal review, not a lecture. The tour should be designed meet the characteristics and interests the group.

Talking About the Library

Tours should include many parts of t library with enough time to stop a look or browse. The librarian should n use library jargon or technical langua to describe the library, and should n try to explain the card catalog, t classification system, or the functions various departments unless asked. B the librarian *should* explain the spec services of the library that disadvanta adults could use, such as t bookmobile, film showings, depo collections, or books-by-mail.

Showing Materials

Disadvantaged adults should be shov materials that are of interest to th based on prior discussions between th or their teachers and the librarian. So materials can be collected and display

	on tables before the tour. The group should be given time to browse in these materials and shown where other materials are located, such as pamphlets, magazines, and paperbacks. Parents should be encouraged to select something to take home for their children. Free pamphlets should be offered to the group.		
Showing Films	The tour might include the showing of a film. Enough time should be planned for the film. It is helpful, too, if the group knows the name of the film and its subject ahead of time, and even more effective if the group can choose the film or the topic of the film they will see.		
Special Occasion Tours	Festive tours can be planned around holiday themes such as Thanksgiving or Valentine's Day, or arranged as a family night or bring-a-friend occasions. Some librarians have invited members of adult basic education classes to write letters or poems for exhibit at the library during the tour.		
Library Cards	If the members of the tour group have not been able to get library cards already, these can be offered during the tour with an explanation of how to check out materials.		

PITFALLS TO AVOID

The library should plan tours carefull so they will run smoothly and be c maximum benefit to disadvantage adults. Some pitfalls to avoid ar discussed below.

Choosing the Wrong Time

Disadvantaged adults, like all adult have family and job responsibilities tha may leave little time for extended trip The librarian and the ABE teache should consult with the students i choosing the day and the time, especiall if families and friends are invited on th tour. The time scheduled has to b agreeable to the teacher, the student and the library.

Inviting Too Many

The librarian should estimate the size o the group the library can handle wel This may mean that only one adult bas education class can tour at one time.

Holding Isolated or One-Shot Tours

It is recommended that adult bas education classes get follow up tours o the library. If the first tour has oriente them to the library and alleviated the fears and suspicions, a second tour ma be needed to reinforce that experien and to start them checking out materia on their own. Some libraries have fa and spring tours for classes. This especially helpful in rural areas whe disadvantaged adults live many mil from the library.

Being Discouraged by the Initial Tour

Some librarians have been discouraged by the initial tour because the disadvantaged adults did not check out any materials, and they did not come back to the library on their own. These things may happen, but it doesn't mean the tour was a failure. The librarian should continue to make classroom visits and to hold follow-up tours. The problem may be lack of leisure time or available transportation. The librarian should strive to develop a one-to-one relationship with disadvantaged adults and invite them to come to the library with their families. The AAEC Floyd County Project found that ABE students checked out well over twice as many books on the second tour as they did on the first.

Being Unaware of the Timidity of Students

Sometimes disadvantaged adults take some time to overcome fear and suspicion of the library and its staff. They may arrive feeling ill-at-ease about visiting a new place. Some librarians have found it may take as long as half an hour to put the adults at ease—or this may not be noticeably accomplished during the first tour. Some adults may not want to come to the library at first, and will have to be persuaded. To some librarians, this need to sell services is repugnant, but if they are convinced of the worth of their wares and are sincerely interested in serving the unserved, the need to sha their enthusiasm will follow naturally.

Taking Too Long; Trying to See Too Much

Experience has shown that many adul are very tired by the time of the evening class, and simply wear ou before the end of a tour in a lar facility with many departments, such a metropolitan library. Prior plannin with the teacher can help suggest th specific departments or subjects th group is most likely to be interested i A follow-up visit can be arranged to s the rest of the library.

Not Making Circulation Procedures Clear; Penalties for Overdue or Non-returned Books

Nothing dampens the budding interest a potential library user faster than become entangled in an overdue proble over the first books he or she checks ou If it is library policy to charge fines, the the length of the checkout period an the amount of the fines charged per da must be made very clear to the grou Since some members may not be able return to the library on their own with the checkout period, it may be helpf to arrange for the teacher to collect th books checked out at this first visit, to waive fines for materials checked o during these introductory tours.

WHAT OTHER LIBRARIES HAVE DONE

Libraries that participated in the AAE Library Training Project and conducte successful tours can be contacted o visited for further information. Thes libraries include:

Floyd County Public Library, Prestonsburg, Kentucky

This library conducts tours in both th fall and the spring for all adult basi education classes. A school bus bring the students long distances from all ove the county. (Since it is a schoo function, the buses are covered b insurance.) The library also provide bookmobile service to the classes so th students have received library servic prior to the tours. Refreshments ar served during the tours.

Choctaw County Public Library, Butler, Alabama

This library provides tours to adult basi education classes on a class-at-a-tim basis. Classes come from different par of the county. There are depos collections in the classrooms but n bookmobile service. One class meets i the library and uses library materia regularly.

Hurricane Library, Putnam County, West Virginia

This library has arranged with th Community Action Program to use the bus to transport adult basic educatio students to the library on a regul schedule.

Richland County Public Library, Columbia, South Carolina	The library provides tours to small groups of adult basic education students. The groups average 13 persons.		by the bus company, and branch distributed bookmark schedules, but t project was abandoned because few us it.
Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, Tennessee	The Library-ABE project at this library arranged 62 field trips to the main and branch libraries for adult basic education classes. For the tours, the project arranged dates, times, and sites with the individual ABE teachers and librarians, arranged for transportation, put special "coping skills center" in order, set out give-away pamphlets, picked up the class, helped conduct the tours, and sometimes showed films.		
Other Libraries	The *Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland,* provides trips to branch libraries for adult groups. The library did special programs for the tour groups on topics like consumer and legal protection and Afro-American affairs, and showed films on sex education, narcotics, and smoking. The *Toledo (Ohio) Public Library* experimented with providing free transportation to the downtown library and the inner city branches in the evening by using public transportation. Bus schedules were publicized on radio and television and printed as display ads		

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Little is reported in the literature on conducting tours of the library for disadvantaged adults except the book by Eleanor F. Brown, *Library Services to the Disadvantaged*, 1971, Metuchen, New Jersey, Scarecrow Press, pp. 131, 435, 439.

Most of the material used in the preparation of this guide was obtained from interviews with librarians who have conducted tours.

LIBRARY SERVICE GUIDES

1. Materials Selection for Disadvantaged Adults
2. Assessing Community Information and Service Needs
3. Using Pamphlets with Disadvantaged Adults
4. Deposit Collections of Special Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
5. Utilizing Volunteers in Expanding Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
6. Books By Mail Services: Moving the Library to Disadvantaged Adults
7. Evening and Weekend Library Services for Disadvantaged Adults
8. The Library as a Community Information and Referral Center
9. Planning the Expansion of Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
10. Working with Library Trustees to Expand Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
11. Reader Guidance Services for Disadvantaged Adults
12. The Recruitment of Disadvantaged Adults: Effective Publicity
13. Conducting Tours to the Library for Groups of Disadvantaged Adults
14. ABE—What Is It?
15. The Relationship of Disadvantagement to Library Services
16. In-service Training of Personnel to Serve Disadvantaged Adults
17. Adult Education in the Library: ABE, GED, CLEP, and the Open University
18. Book Talks: Encouraging Library Materials Usage by Disadvantaged Adults
19. Techniques for Teachers: Teaching the Application of Basic Skills to Everyday Life Problems
20. Displaying Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
21. Bookmobile Services: Moving the Library to Disadvantaged Adults
22. Expanding Library Services to the Elderly
23. Using Audiovisuals With Disadvantag Adults
24. Expanding Library Services to t Institutionalized
25. Interagency Cooperation: The Pub Library and Agencies that Ser Disadvantaged Adults
26. Adjusting School Libraries for Use Disadvantaged Adults
27. Speakers Bureaus for Disadvantag Adults
28. Maintaining Separate Collections Library Materials for Disadvantag Adults
29. Client Participation in Expanding Libra Services to Disadvantaged Adults
30. The Role of the College Library in t Education of Disadvantaged Adults
31. Public Library Services to Young Dis vantaged Adults
32. Working with Elected Officials to Expa Library Services to Disadvantaged Adult

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